



Energy Efficiency in the Home

by James Carey and Morris Carey

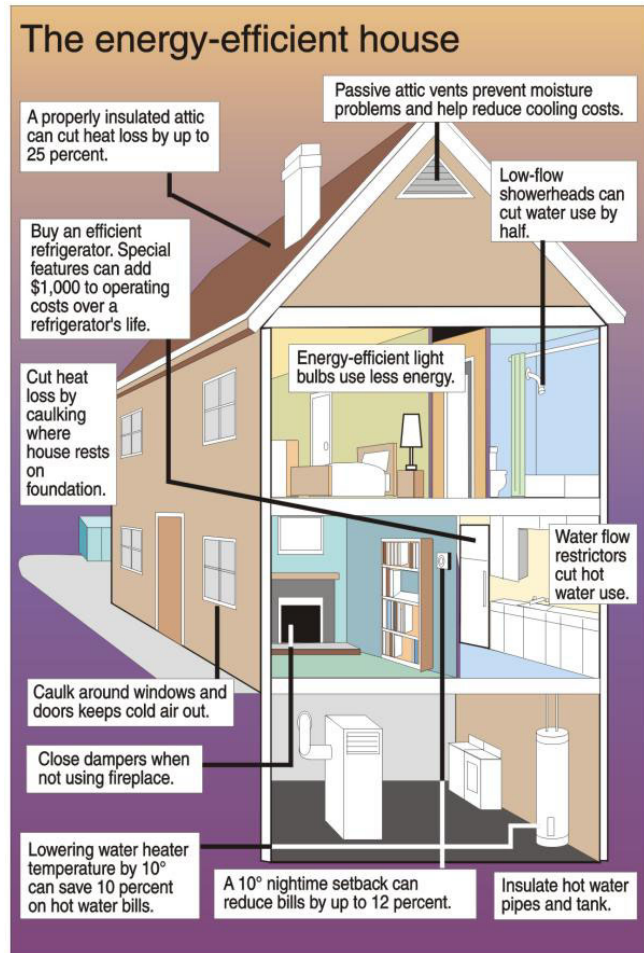
An energy-efficient home is a cost-effective one and is usually more comfortably cooler on hot days and warmer on chilly ones. New appliances and windows, insulation for the walls, floor and ceiling all contribute to a home's energy efficiency. But making your home energy-smart doesn't have to be costly or complicated. Follow along as we take a tour through such a home.

Turn down the temperature at the water heater by 10 degrees and save 10% annually on water heating bills. And, you might find that there is absolutely no loss in temperature or comfort in the shower or bath as a result. Try it. You can always turn the temperature back up if it proves otherwise.

Annual cleaning of your water heater tank can save another 5% on the water heater bill. Use a **water heater cleaning solution** to help dissolve mineral and sediment buildup at the base of the tank.

Most folks are willing to insulate a water heater because it is fairly easy to do and the **water heater insulation kit** (blanket and adhesive tape) is inexpensive. Equally important is insulating hot water lines beneath the floor using **prefabricate pipe insulation**. The self-adhesive strip makes the job quick and easy. In most homes the hot water lines can be insulated for under \$100 and in one afternoon.

Modern American homes are required to have a setback thermostat, but some are complicated and difficult to operate. A **programmable setback thermostat** can switch the furnace on when heat is needed and turn it down to a lower temperature when everyone is snuggled in for the night. The same thermostat also can be programmed to shut the furnace off completely when no one is home. Also, it can turn the heat on again before anyone gets home.



AP/ Stan Kohler

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Call your local utility company to find out if they offer free instructions in the use of thermostats. Even if you have to pay a heating contractor to teach you how to use yours, the savings on your heating bill in one winter alone probably would cover the cost.

Heat rises, and most folks who have tried to clean a ceiling during the winter know that this is a job for a person in a bathing suit. (Talk about feeling the full effect of your furnace's output.) You wouldn't think that heat from the ceiling could make its way back down to the floor and out through the fireplace but it can and does. Air currents in the home increase when the damper in a fireplace is left open allowing the warmth that exists to be drawn up the chimney. If your fireplace doesn't contain a damper, a **retro damper kit** can be installed on top of the chimney.

Your Checklist!

- Water heater cleaning solution
- Water heater insulation kit
- Prefabricate pipe insulation
- Programmable setback thermostat
- Retro damper kit
- Caulking
- Foam sealant
- Gasket
- Weather-stripping
- Refrigerator door gasket
- Low-flow showerhead

Caulking and gaskets are two of the least expensive methods of reducing home-energy waste. Every duct, wire or pipe that penetrates a wall, ceiling or floor is a potential energy waster. Penetrations and gaps in floors, ceilings, windows and doors should be sealed with an appropriate **caulking, foam sealant, gasket, or weather-stripping**. An electric wall switch, for example, costs about 15 cents to insulate with a pre-cut gasket. Plumbing vents begin below the floor and end above the roof. The holes through which these pipes pass should be sealed with foam to prevent cold air from entering the house through the floor and attic. Penetrations made for electric wires create the same problem. They also should be sealed above and below.

The refrigerator uses more energy than any other home appliance. Make sure that the **refrigerator door gasket** is in premium condition and that the motor is operating at peak efficiency. A door gasket can be purchased and installed for less than \$35.

And don't forget, a **low-flow showerhead** saves water and in so doing reduces water-heating costs – not to mention water costs – by as much as half.

Morris and James Carey are nationally recognized experts on home building and renovation. They share their nearly half-century of experience as award winning licensed contractors with millions of people nationwide through weekly radio programming and a syndicated newspaper column both titled "On The House."

Visit their web site at www.onthehouse.com for more home improvement tips and information.

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